

The Amsterdam School of Economics (ASE)

Mission, Ambition, and Strategy – update

(R. Beetsma, May 9, 2016)

1. Mission

The mission of the ASE is:

- To offer excellent teaching in economics, business economics, econometrics, and actuarial science, at the bachelor, master and Ph.D.-level, to students who are sufficiently qualified and motivated;
- To perform path-breaking and high-impact research in economics, business economics, econometrics, and actuarial science, and to valorise the results of this research.

2. Ambition

Given its mission, it is the general ambition of the ASE to:

- Educate bachelor students that are competitive on the (inter)national labour market and that are in principle qualified for admission to any related Master program around the world, whereby the top 10% must be able to enter a related Research Master program;
- Educate master students that are highly competitive on the (inter)national labour market, whereby the top 25% must be able to enter a related top Research Master program;
- Educate Ph.D.-students that are well qualified to pursue an academic career, whereby the top 10% must be able to acquire a tenure-track position at a top university in Europe;
- Belong to the top-10 economics departments in Europe based on the ASE's research performance.

3. Identity, environment, strengths and weaknesses

To fulfil its mission and to reach its ambition, the ASE has to make a number of strategic choices. These choices are in part influenced by the ASE's identity, by the (institutional) environment within which ASE has to operate, and by the current strengths and weaknesses of the ASE.

3.1 The identity of ASE

ASE comprises some 150 staff members, part-time employed and Ph.D.-students included. The school is organised around eight (research) programs:

- Actuarial Science and Mathematical Finance
- Equilibrium, Expectations and Dynamics (CeNDEF)
- Econometrics
- Experimental and Political Economics (CREED)
- Human Capital
- Macro and International Economics
- Markets and Organizations
- Economic of Taxation

The ASE's faculty is involved in the following educational programs:

- All four bachelor programs of the FEB (Economics & Business, Economics of Taxation, Econometrics & Operations Research, and Actuarial Sciences)
- The Liberal Arts and Sciences Bachelor program of the Amsterdam University College
- The interdisciplinary BetaGamma Bachelor program
- The interdisciplinary PPLE Bachelor program
- Five master programs of the FEB (Actuarial Science and Mathematical Finance, Business Economics, Economics, Economics of Taxation, Econometrics)
- The M.Phil. program offered by the Tinbergen Institute
- Several executive programs of the Amsterdam Business School

Appendix B provides a complete overview of ASE's teaching activities, including an indication of the size of the various programs in recent academic years.

3.2 The institutional setting of ASE

The ASE is part of the FEB, which is part of the UvA, and operates within the international academic community. This yields a number of (institutional) boundaries.

- UvA vision and strategic priorities for teaching (UvA, 2012):
 - Differentiation and selectivity, for example through honours programs
 - Further development of interdisciplinary programs
 - Active student selection
 - Stimulating ambition and commitment from students
 - All bachelor and master programs are research-based
 - Enhancing international orientation
- UvA vision and strategic priorities for research (UvA, 2012):
 - Focus and selectivity: at least 50% of first-stream resources should be spent on the research priority areas ("zwaartepunten")
 - Promotion of growth of publications in top-journals and citations
 - Growth in grants, both second and third stream, and prestigious prizes

- External research acquisition by scientific staff
- UvA priorities in personnel policy (UvA, 2012):
 - Enhanced flexibility in appointments
 - More job mobility into and out of the UvA
 - Enhanced employability
- Financial policy at the FEB-level: an internal allocation model stipulates how departments and sections are funded for their teaching and research activities. In particular, all sections are responsible for maintaining a balanced budget.

3.3 Strengths and weaknesses

The strengths of the ASE are:

- High-quality researchers, as shown by the substantial fraction of researchers that continues to publish in journals with high Article Influence Scores.
- Master programs that prepare students well for the (inter)national labour market, as shown by the continuous high ranking of these programs in the UvA monitor.
- Increasing number of high quality students that apply for one of ASE's Master programs.
- Staff members with close links with policy making institutions.
- Its location near the centre of Amsterdam, an attractive and internationally-oriented location that is the gravity point of the business sector in the Netherlands, in particular the Dutch financial centre. Moreover, it is close to policymaking and media institutions.

The weaknesses of the ASE are:

- Insufficient corporate spirit and an under-exploitation of individual successes.
- Limited contacts with alumni.
- Limited success in attracting 2nd stream resources.
- Academic salaries in the Netherlands are generally modest relative to those that are paid in a number of foreign countries, in particular the U.S. and a number of universities in the U.K.

4. Strategic choices

The strategic choices the ASE faces relate to personnel and to the portfolio compositions of both teaching and research.

4.1 Personnel policy

- The ASE will increase the fraction of bachelor's level teaching, in particular exercise classes, conducted by full-time teachers. Conditional on good performance, full-time teachers may receive a permanent contract. Full-time teachers preferably hold a Ph.D.

- Staff will be flexibly deployed for teaching, implying that, in principle, each tenured staff member should be able to teach the various mainstream economics courses at the bachelor level.
- Recruitment for new research staff will take place at the level of the School. By default vacancies will be filled at the tenure track level (FEB, 2013). Only in exceptional circumstances senior researchers may be hired; here the final decision will be taken at the level of the School by the ASE management team. Determinants of the outcome are the qualities of the candidates and the needs of the School at large. Teaching needs indicated by the sections and needs in research expertise are inputs for the search for suitable candidates.
- In the case of (almost) equal qualification, preference will be given to a female candidate.
- For women, the length of the tenure track period in the case of pregnancy will be extended with the length of the maternity leave (i.e., with a maximum of three months). The moment of the tenure decision will also be shifted with the length of the maternity leave (i.e., with a maximum of three months)
- ASE follows the FEB-procedure for granting tenure and promotions, with two additions: (i) before the Promotion and Tenure (P&T) Committee meets to decide about a tenure advice, the candidate's section head consults at least all the other ASE section heads and the professors in his/her section about the possible tenure decision, and (ii) before the Promotion and Tenure (P&T) Committee meets to decide about an advice about a promotion to professorship, the ASE's Department Chair consults all regular ASE professors about the possible promotion.
- For all official purposes, in particular as input for tenure decisions, promotions and research time allocation, research output will be measured based on article influence scores. The official counting is conducted by ASE's Research Institute.
- The criteria for tenure and promotion must be in line with the requirements applied at the European top 10 of relevant departments. To guarantee this, promotion and tenure decisions will require evaluation letters from scholars from the top-10 departments, who are asked to compare the candidate's cv with that of the peer group at their own departments.
- Recruitment and promotion decisions will take into account in particular research, teaching and the potential of candidates to acquire external funding; these criteria could also be reflected by a candidate's outside options.
- Recruitment at the tenure track level follows standard international practice, while the recruitment committee will be broadly composed, containing members from at least two different sections.

As a general rule, people with a Ph.D. from the FEB will not be hired on a tenure track position. Only in exceptional circumstances this may occur, to be decided upon then at the level of the School by the ASE management team. A necessary requirement in that case is that the candidate in question has spent at least three years at a different research institute not connected to the FEB.

4.2 Teaching

- Program directors are formally responsible for the structure and contents of their respective curricula. That means in particular that no section nor any individual 'owns' a course.
- Development of new tracks within the MSc Business Economics.
- Further development executive teaching, in particular executive teaching with a specific ASE profile.
- Acquiring the 'internationalisation' certificate of the NVAO for at least two of ASE's master programs.
- Enhancing further the quality of incoming students through selection insofar selection is possible.
- Whenever possible, admission of students will be based on capabilities and motivation.
- Teaching in English, whenever this is (legally) possible and the relevant literature is available in English. Tutorial classes may be offered in Dutch, if it is possible to form tutorial groups consisting only of Dutch-speaking students and Dutch-speaking teachers are available.
- Teaching in the Master's programs is preferably done by staff members who have earned the standard amount of research time.

4.3 Research

- Researchers that score above a certain criterion based on Article Influence Scores obtain additional research time.
- As a general rule, 1st stream money Ph.D. projects are reserved for M.Phil. graduates from the TI.
- Whenever possible, Ph.D. students on 2nd or 3rd stream project money should also be selected from the TI M.Phil. graduates (Ph.D. students who have not followed the TI M.Phil. program will be strongly encouraged-to obtain a TI research qualification).
- On average eight new Ph.D. students per year coming from the TI will be appointed.

4.4. Valorisation and external funding

- Valorisation will be an assessment item for senior researchers.
- Enhancing the participation in national committees.
- Expanding the number of named chairs.
- Expanding the fraction of Ph.D. students that is externally financed by private sector parties or public institutions.
- Expanding the fraction of postdoc positions that is externally financed by private sector parties or public institutions.
- Intensifying the contacts with secondary schools, for instance through the organization of an ASE Day of Economics.
Enhancing alumni relations.

References:

FEB (2013), *Tenure Track at the FEB*, July 5, University of Amsterdam.

FEB (2014), *Final Report of the Curriculum Committee BSc in Economics and Business*, University of Amsterdam.

UvA (2012), *Oog voor Talent – Instellingsplan 2011-2014*.

Appendix A: ASE Strategy Commission

Input for this document have been provided by the ASE Strategy Commission, which consisted of the following members:

Professor R. Beetsma, Chairman

Professor H.P. Boswijk

Professor J. Hinloopen

Professor F. Klaassen

Professor H. Oosterbeek

Professor M. Vellekoop

Secretary of the Commission was Ms. Wilma de Kruijf, Departmental Secretary of the ASE.

However, not all the statements in this report necessarily reflect the opinions of the individual Commission members. In particular, there was disagreement about the formulation of the third bullet of Subsection 4.1. on the definition of vacancies. Commission members Professors Klaassen and Vellekoop were of the view that “Influence on appointments within a section by other ASE members must be limited to the head of the ASE department and the directors of research and education, because they will always focus on the interests of the School as a whole and see beyond the interests of particular sections. Since section heads have been made responsible for the sections’ budgets and HRM policies, the ultimate decision on appointments must be taken by them.” Further, Professors Klaassen and Vellekoop disagreed with the seventh bullet of Subsection 4.1. on the use of article influence scores. In their view article influence scores vary substantially across disciplines. Hence, they should not be used to compare the research output of people from different disciplines, unless such differences are explicitly taken into account.

Appendix B: Course programmes ASE

Name of programme/track	# Stud.: 2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
BSc Actuariële Wetenschappen	22	18	15	16
BSc Econometrie en OR	142	159	152	160
BSc Economie en Bedrijfskunde	567	795	695	588
BSc Economics and Business	158	158	202	182
BSc Fiscale Economie	77	69	69	101
MSc in Economics:	112	126	115	125
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioral Ec. and Game Theory • Markets and Regulation • Development Economics • International Ec. and Globalisation • Monetary Policy and Banking • Public Policy 				
MSc in Business Economics:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managerial Economics and Strategy • Competition, Law and Economics: <i>new in 16/17</i> 	16	30	28	18
MSc in Actuarial Science and Risk Management:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General • Quantitative Risk Management: <i>new in 16/17</i> 	49	32	23	28
MSc in Econometrics:	43	49	69	70
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Econometrics • Mathematical Economics • Financial Econometrics • Big Data Business Analytics • Free Track 				
MSc in Economics of Taxation	47	51	51	53